

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

This Bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to provide information concerning the British churches in wartime, and to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war.

Number 204

SEPTEMBER 30th, 1943

BATTLE OF BRITAIN SUNDAY—THE PRIMATE'S SERMON

We print below the full text of the sermon preached by the Archbishop of Canterbury at the "Battle of Britain" service held in St. Paul's Cathedral on September 26th. Their Majesties the King and Queen were present, and the Cathedral was filled with a distinguished company, including the Lord Mayor of London, who received Their Majesties at the foot of the Cathedral steps.

The Archbishop took as his text the words:

Thy way is in the sea, and thy paths in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.—Psalm 77:19,20.

"We are met," he said, "to commemorate a great deliverance. We all know, as only a few knew at the time, how dire was the peril to our nation in the late summer of 1940, and with our nation to the cause of freedom and justice in the whole civilised world.

"Observers in other countries took for granted the loss of this island. I saw a letter written in mid-July that year from a great friend of this country and its cause in the United States, one who was actively working to promote understanding of the real issue on that side of the Atlantic. He spoke of the steps to be taken so soon as the Royal Family and the Imperial Government were safely transferred to Canada. So a friendly citizen of the United States, a man of conspicuously well-balanced judgment, regarded our position at that time. He did not discuss the question whether this island could be held against the assault then manifestly impending; he took it for granted that this island must be lost to the enemy, and went on to discuss the steps by which the freedom of civilised mankind could still be saved.

"No one in this country thought like that. That was partly due to a happy ignorance; we did not know how heavy the odds against us were. It was partly due to a belief, built up through the ages, that if only the spirit of the people be true to itself our island territory is inviolable. But beyond all this was a faith, stimulated though not created by inspiring leadership, that violence and fraud would not prevail over justice and loyalty, and that whatever our personal and national shortcomings, our cause was just. So, thinking little of the imminent menace, our people gave themselves to the discharge of obvious duty. Calculation of resources they left to others; they would do, each one, the allotted task with care-free devotion, serving the common cause with the greater thoroughness because none let himself be troubled by anxiety for the result. When Mussolini fell the Prime Minister, looking back to the entry of Italy into the war, uttered these memorable words; I could wish that all schools should teach them to every generation of their pupils:—

"It is not given to the cleverest and most calculating of mortals to know with certainty what is their interest. Yet it is given to quite a lot of simple folk to know with certainty what is their duty."

"It was in such perception and pursuit of duty that the Battle of Britain was fought and won. We think first of the Fighter-Pilots of the Royal Air Force, few, fearless and unwearying; we think of all who made their prowess possible; we think of Civil Defence Workers of every grade; and we recall the patient heroism of the great multitude. It is right to recall these things. Gratitude is an emotion which does justice to those who have

Distributed by

BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICES

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served well and preserves from selfishness those who have received service. Let us give full play to our gratitude where it is so fully due.

"And most of all let us give thanks to God, Who guideth our statesmen and the commanders of our forces, Who is the source of the courage and devotion in all who fought and served. And let us find now and so long as our nation lasts an anchor of steadfastness for times of perplexity and danger, in the great deliverance which God wrought through our people, both military and civilian, in those dark days when wise observers saw no sign of hope.

"The Bible teaches us always in this way to find steadfastness for the present in what God wrought in the past. So the Psalmist whose words I quoted at the outset was brooding over the difficulties which beset his countrymen and the lack of any present sign of Divine help; but he found strength as he recalled that there were days still darker in the past, yet God had given deliverance where men could only despair.

"Will the Lord absent Himself for ever, and will He be no more intreated? Is His mercy clean gone for ever, and is His promise come utterly to an end for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious, and will He shut up His loving kindness in displeasure? And I said, It is mine own infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most Highest."

"So his mind goes back to the moment when to all human calculation destruction must have appeared inevitable. Before was the sea; behind was the pursuing Egyptian host. But where no way was, and where when they had gone through no trace of their passage could be traced, God led them to safety.

"Thy way is in the sea, and thy paths in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known; but thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

"It is in days of hope rather than of perplexity that we now recall with thankfulness the saving of our country beyond all probability or calculation of worldly wisdom. But times of hope and confidence have their own dangers, too—the danger of effort prematurely relaxed, the danger of vigilance no longer maintained, but, above all, the danger of forgetting Him on Whom at all times we utterly depend. Let us then use this day of thankful commemoration to impress upon our minds, so easily inclined to forget, how great is our debt to those who saved us in the critical days three years ago, how complete our obligation of gratitude and service

to God Who used them as the means of a deliverance rightly called miraculous.

"And then we must ask, why should God thus preserve us? We may not suppose that He has some special favour for us above all other members of His great family. Our knowledge of ourselves is enough to assure us that it is not because we are conspicuous above all others in moral desert. But we may and must believe that He Who has led our fathers in ways so strange and has preserved our land in a manner so marvellous, has a purpose for us to serve in the preparation for His perfect Kingdom. In the tradition of our nation and Empire we are entrusted with a treasure to be used for the welfare of mankind. That we still enjoy it is due to God's preservation of us from the enemy whose triumph would have destroyed it. To Him we owe all service which as a nation and as individuals we can give; so long as that service is our endeavour, we should never be baffled or disheartened by any perplexity that may arise. Faith has reasons of its own, and one of these is memory of hope, sustained when circumstances urged despair and vindicated when the hostile odds were overwhelming. For our faith is in Him Whose way is in the sea and His paths in the great waters, and Who, though His footsteps are not known, yet leads His people like sheep by the hands of those whom He raises up to be their leaders.

"Thanks be to God Who preserved us from destruction; to Him for evermore be pledged the service of our lives."

MR. ISAAC FOOT'S AMERICAN TOUR

The Rt. Hon. Isaac Foot has recently returned to this country after being in the United States for four months. He went at the invitation of the Board of Bishops of the Methodist Church in America. He spoke on practically every day of his long tour, took part in Methodist Conferences in many States, preached in many Methodist Churches and addressed five Methodist Universities. He has brought home to Britain a very vivid sense of the importance of the Methodist Church in American life.

The following letter, which he received at the end of his tour from Bishop Oxnam, Secretary of the Council of Methodist Bishops, is taken from *The Methodist Recorder* for September 23rd:—

"My Dear Mr. Foot,—Within a few days you will complete the all too heavy schedule we arranged for you and will be en route to England. On behalf of the Council of Bishops of the Methodist Church, may I express our

deepest appreciation of your extraordinary contribution to us? In a little more than one hundred days you have delivered nearly one hundred addresses, visiting fifteen of our States, East, West, North and South. I am writing with care when I use the word 'extraordinary' in connection with your service. I know of no single visitor, save only the Prime Minister, who has had greater influence in deepening the friendship of the English and the American people.

"Throughout your addresses you have stressed the necessity of translating our ethical ideals into realities, but the ethical ideals you have proclaimed are those that lie at the heart of the religion of Jesus. The result is your message has come with the authority of our faith and at the same time has reached the minds and hearts of the American people whose real spirit is democratic. We have come to know England better because of you. The ideals for which this war is waged stood out in bold relief. You have steeled our resolve to see the conflict through to the bitter end. But you have done much more than that. You have held before us the vision of an ordered world, grounded in justice and brotherhood.

"I sincerely trust that you will convey to our Methodist people in Britain, and to all others whom you may meet, the love of our people and assure them that the ties of a common language, a common objective and a common faith are of such a nature as to insure our unity in the hours when we shall face problems at once baffling and highly complex, problems that we intend to solve in the interests of an organised world.

"We are deeply indebted to you, sir, and shall long remember your messages phrased in such charming English and bearing such penetrating insight.

"In real respect, believe me,
Ever sincerely yours,
C. BROMLEY OXNAM."

In a recent interview on his experiences in the U.S.A., Mr. Foot said:

"A feeling of sympathy with Great Britain is intense, and we have the enormous advantage of possessing the goodwill of those who are of British birth and lineage. . . . This encourages me as I think of the problems that will confront our two countries after the war. During the war there will be no considerable difficulties, but after the war we shall have to spend five, ten or fifteen years in laying the foundation of a new world order. That time—a time of frustration and defeatism it may be—will make great demands upon our two peoples, and it will present an opportunity to the enemy of the spirit of man.

Our business in these days is to build up reserves of goodwill upon which we shall be able to draw."

AMERICAN "CRUSADE FOR A NEW WORLD ORDER"

One of the most interesting efforts by a large church to bring its influence to bear on national policy is seen in the "Crusade for a New World Order" recently launched by the Methodist Church of North America.

It began with a Council of Methodist Bishops held in December, 1942. The Council met President Roosevelt, members of the American Cabinet, and other important leaders, including Madame Chiang Kai-Shek. The official account of their activities states: "Recognising that decisions relative to the post-war world would have profound influence upon centuries to come, the Council appointed a Commission of Twelve Bishops to consider and draft plans concerning the relation of the Church to the plans for the post-war world. In international collaboration lies the possibility of enduring peace. In isolationism lies the certainty of continuing war. The Commission of Twelve drafted plans for The Crusade for a New World Order."

The following description gives the plan and purpose of the Crusade:—

"It is an organised effort to register the opinion of the members and constituents of the Methodist Church on the question of the participation of the United States of America in such international co-operation as may be necessary to establish world law and order. It is based upon a threefold conviction:

"*First*, the religious forces of the nation must become influential at the place decision is made, *before it is made*, so that their convictions may be regarded as creative and co-operative contributions. Religious forces must not wait until decision is made and then protest.

"*Second*, Methodists, after more than a century of missionary service throughout the world and more than a quarter-century of education in the field of international relations, are world-minded and desire world order.

"*Third*, the members of the Methodist Church, as citizens, desire such action by the United States Government as will insure full participation in, and continuing co-operation with, such international organisation in the political, economic and other fields, as may be necessary to end war, to establish world law and order, economic and racial justice, and to guarantee the freedom of the individual."

Other information contained in the official statement on the Crusade shows that the Crusade is dovetailed into the plans made by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ, whose Commission on the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace has made such an impression on both sides of the Atlantic.

The plans include definite steps whereby each church and parish and each individual church member can bring his influence to bear on national policy and can endeavour to influence it in the direction of international collaboration and co-operation.

BRITISH FREE CHURCHMEN AND THE SOVIET

The following resolution was passed by the Free Church Federal Council at its meeting on September 21st, 1943:

"This Free Church Federal Council expresses its profound sympathy with the Christian people and with the entire population of the Soviet Union in the sufferings they have long endured at the hands of the invader, its admiration for the patience and courage which have marked the Russian resistance, and its gratitude to God for the success already achieved in the struggle for liberty.

"The Council thankfully notes that the Soviet Government has recognised the autonomy of the Orthodox Church in connection with its religious tasks, and trusts that this decision illustrates the nature of the relations which the Government will sustain with other religious bodies so that freedom of religion may be full and effective.

"The Council rejoices in the large measure of social and economic advance attained by the people of the U.S.S.R., and the opening to them of a life of larger opportunity and culture. The members pray that the understanding between the peoples of Russia and of Britain may be deepened and strengthened, that decisive and speedy victory may be granted to the cause in which they are allies, and that through the years to come they may as friends and comrades together serve the cause of freedom, justice and peace throughout the earth."

SCOTTISH MINISTER'S WELCOME TO AMERICAN TROOPS

A traveller from America to Britain sends us the following account of a striking incident on a ship laden with American troops. Among the passengers was the Rev. Harold A. Cockburn, who was returning to Britain after an eight months' visit to the United States as "an ambassador of goodwill." He was asked to address the Americans as

the great ship lay off the British coast. We quote from the account sent to us by our correspondent:

"The sun is shining brightly and the green hills of England are in the distance. Gulls fly overhead. The soldiers have been gazing enquiringly toward this new strange country all morning.

"Then the Church Service began. Three American chaplains took turns in leading parts of the service; one reading the lesson, a second conducting the prayers; a third leading the singing, aided by an octet composed of nurses and soldiers.

"Chaplain Hobson, the Episcopal Chaplain, then arose to say that they were to have the great pleasure of hearing from the Rev. Harold Cockburn, of the Church of Scotland, who was just returning from an eight months' trip to America as an 'ambassador of goodwill.'

"Mounting to the top of a pile of life rafts on the deck, Mr. Cockburn, a commanding figure standing over six feet three, began by saying that it was a great pleasure to talk to American troops landing on British soil for the first time. 'We have superficial differences—you pronounce schedule one way, we pronounce it another (indicating the difference). What you call crackers, we call biscuits.' (Laughter.) But there are fundamental things which unite us. Goodness, truth, justice, righteousness, freedom, mean the same to us as to you.

"As you near our shores you have finished one adventure and are preparing for still another. I feel I know what you will face in the days ahead, because I was in the last war for four and a half years. There is one thing which will sustain you on the day of battle, and that is faith in God. Our lesson this morning spoke of Christ sleeping in the boat, the fear of the men when the storm arose, and their rousing Christ. When He had calmed the raging of the water He said to them, 'Where is your faith?'

"The calmness of Jesus," he went on, "was one of His great lessons for us all. His calmness in the presence of His persecutors, His calmness when the soldiers came to arrest Him; His calmness even as He died on the Cross. What was the source of His calmness in the face of every great crisis in His life; it was His unshakable faith in God.

"The calmness with which the British met the disaster of the blitz was basically due to a faith in God. Courage and calmness both stem from an unshakable faith in God. You will face some difficulties in the days ahead. Let me leave one word with you—have faith in God."